



ANSON MILLS

Farro Medio with Butter-Poached Leeks and Morels

Yield

4 first-course portions

Time

Overnight to soak the farro, about 45 minutes to prep, and about 1 hour to cook

Cooking Remarks

Because farro is a robust, resilient grain that often takes hours to cook, most commercial farro is pearled—like barley—to reduce its cooking time. Pearling farro or barley means that once hulled, part of its bran layer is scalped off. When the bran layer goes, the flavor goes, too. What remains? A chewy plug of pure starch. Anson Mills pearls no farro.

Our work-around for farro's long cook time comes with an overnight soak, during which time the amylase/amylase starch conversion begins and the farro will smell sweet and fresh. Once in the pot, it still takes its good time (a full hour), but picks up the perks of absorbing full-flavor homemade chicken stock infused with leeks and mushrooms.

Speaking of mushrooms, we had fresh morels shipped to our door from Mikuni Wild Harvest, premier hunter-gatherers operating out of Seattle and Vancouver. The morels arrived clean, pristine, and absolutely compelling in flavor. Hand-collected morels will certainly—and morels sourced elsewhere may very well—find themselves in need of additional grooming. (The paradoxical thing about mushrooms is that they're frequently filthy, yet they hate water.) Some mushrooms can be brushed clean with varying success, but not morels. Their butter-grabbing little pockets and hollow stems take in all kinds of debris. Morels require dunking. Below, we offer excellent directions for their post-harvest care, courtesy of thespruce.com. Oyster mushrooms, which are cultivated, have very little dirt to eliminate.

Leeks aren't much better than mushrooms for sand and dirt. We provide cleaning instructions for them as well. The smaller the leeks you can find for this dish, the prettier, in our opinion. They won't really look like spring vegetables if they're mature.

The butter leftover from the poaching vegetables will make outstanding scrambled eggs or omelettes and lovely sautéed vegetables.

Equipment Mise en Place

For this recipe, you will need a a medium bowl, a colander, large bowl, a medium-size paper bag, a small bowl, a slotted spoon, two heavy-bottomed medium saucepans, a fine-mesh sieve, and a warmed bowl for holding the leeks, and four warmed individual serving bowls.

Ingredients

8 ounces (1¼ cups) Anson Mills Farro Medio
2 cups spring or filtered water
12 to 15 baby leeks or 3 medium leeks
20 fresh morels or 10 to 12 ounces fresh oyster mushrooms
2½ cups Rich Homemade Chicken Stock
Several sprigs fresh thyme, plus thyme leaves for garnish
Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 tablespoons unsalted European-style butter

Directions

- 1.** Turn the farro into a medium bowl. Pour in the water and let soak overnight at room temperature. Drain the farro in a colander set in the sink.
- 2.** Trim the roots off the leeks. Cut off any wilted or leathery portions of the tops and peel away the outer layers; discard these trimmings. Leaving the white and light green portions intact, cut each leek lengthwise into sixths through the center. Fill a large bowl with water and, holding a leek by the root end, plunge it into the water and swish it about vigorously. Submerge the entire leek and fan out the cut parts with your fingers to purge remaining sand or dirt. Clean the remaining leeks in the same way and then drain the leeks in a colander. Cut 2 to 3 inches off the tops and set the tops aside, separate from the bottoms.
- 3.** If you're working with morels, place them in a medium-size paper bag and shake vigorously to free them of dirt and sand, but not with such vigor that the mushrooms sustain injury. Lift the morels from the bag with your hands without transferring their debris along with them. Trim off and discard only the very ends of their stems. Fill a small bowl with water, drop in 3 morels, and swish them about to rinse debris from their pockets. Lift out the mushrooms, change the water, and rinse them again. Repeat this process until the bottom of the bowl shows no sand or dirt. Lift the mushrooms from the water and gently roll them around on several thicknesses of paper towels. (You'll wash the rest of the morels later.) If you're working with oyster mushrooms, trim off the base, freeing the mushrooms. Gently wipe the mushrooms with a damp paper towel and set them aside. Trim the base of any debris and slice it thinly.
- 4.** In a heavy-bottomed medium saucepan, bring the stock to a simmer over medium heat. Add the reserved leek tops, 5 thyme sprigs, and the washed morels or the sliced base of the oyster mushrooms. Simmer over medium heat until the stock, when strained through a fine-mesh sieve, measures 1¼ cups; be sure to press on the solids to extract all the liquid. Return the hot strained stock to the saucepan, stir in the drained farro, and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Cover the pan, reduce the heat to low, and cook the farro very gently until the grains have expanded and are tender throughout, about 1 hour. Sprinkle the farro with salt and pepper to taste, stir well, and cover.
- 5.** About 45 minutes into the farro cooking time, cut the white and light green parts of the leeks into ¾-inch-thick rounds; if your leeks are medium in size, cut them lengthwise in half, and then cut them into ¾-inch-thick half-moons. Either way, you should have about 1½ cups. In a

heavy-bottomed medium saucepan, heat the butter and a few thyme sprigs over low heat until the butter has melted. Add the leeks, sprinkle them with salt and pepper, and spoon melted butter over them to baste. Cover and poach, basting once, until the leeks are tender, about 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and, using a slotted spoon, transfer the leeks to a warmed bowl. Cover to keep warm. If you're using morels, wash and dry the remaining mushrooms as you did the first three and, if they are large, cut them in half lengthwise. Set the saucepan with the leek-infused butter over low heat and turn the morels or the oyster mushrooms into it. Baste them with butter, cover the pan, and cook until tender, basting occasionally, about 5 minutes.

6. When the farro is tender, stir in the poached leeks and 2 tablespoons of the poaching butter. Taste for seasoning. Spoon the farro into four warmed individual serving bowls. Arrange the mushrooms around the perimeter, garnish with a few thyme leaves, and serve.